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Genre et filiation : pratiques et représentations

Editorial

English version

Sophie Coavoux



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SOPHIE COAVOUX

Texte intégral

- 1 In this latest number of *Transtext(e)sTranscultures* we publish papers presented at the one-day workshop organized by GL3 (Gender Lyon 3) which took place 25th October 2013.
- 2 Purposefully setting the question of gender in an interdisciplinary and transcultural perspective, the theme proposed, “Gender and Kinship: Practices and Representations,” opened up a discussion between several areas: Chinese studies, Korean studies, Hispanic studies, Japanese studies, Modern Greek studies, History, Classical studies (Latin language and literature).
- 3 Based on the genealogical model and on the institution of marriage, the traditional conception of kinship, which has contributed to the construction of a hierarchical order of gender relations in modern western societies, has been radically challenged for the past thirty years. However, the profound changes experienced by the family since the mid-1960s (decline in birth and marriage rates, growing rates of natural birth, and divorce, the emergence of new family forms – same-sex parenting, single parenting, blended families –, and Medically Assisted Procreation), have have far not given rise to a consensus. The issue of kinship still remains central to a debate over ethical and ideological concerns that crystallises the traditional tension, if not the opposition, between familialist and individualist conceptions.
- 4 Furthermore, the idea of a universal and timeless conception of kinship and of the relations between kinship and gender is undermined by the confrontation with otherness

brought to the fore by anthropology and ethnology. If the otherness highlighted by the research in these two areas is, for some, a questionable argument, it is, nevertheless, undeniable that many resolutely constructivist cultural representations aim to expand the meanings of gender and kinship, and contest any rigid normative category. The transcultural approach promotes a shift in perspectives, in time and space, leading to a renewal of the theoretical debate on gender and kinship, around the concepts natural/cultural and given/constructed.

Now that society is starting to take note of these changes, we wished to examine kinship through the prism of gender, and thus begin to take stock.

The contributions fall into three parts:

1- Kinship narratives and (re)writing of the self

Nicolas Balutet, Hispanic studies, Marge (CEDFL) : "Mexican kinships at the time of the Revolution"

Belen Hernandez, Hispanic studies, Marge (CEDFL) : "Pedro Almodóvar: maternity as performativity"

Sophie Coavoux, Modern Greek studies, IETT : "*Strella* (A Woman's way, Panos Koutras, 2009): a queer version of the Œdipus myth"

2- Language and kinship, mother tongue, name issue

Ayame Hosoi, Japanese studies, IETT: "Is the Japanese language the "mother" of *Zainichi*? Myth and policy of the mother tongue in some *zainichi* writers"

Marine Bretin-Chabrol, Classical studies (Latin language and literature), HISOMA : "Why do the French believe that Brutus was Caesar's son?"

3- Fathers, mothers, nurses

Min Sook Wang-Le, Korean studies, IETT: "New image of the mother in the novel *Mayonnaise*, by Jeon Hye-sung"

Jacqueline Estran, Chinese studies, IETT: "The Missing Father in Chinese Women's Writing in the 1920s"

Emmanuelle Romanet, History, IETT : "Fostering: a widespread practice in 19th century France"

The first part of the triptych, "Kinship narratives and (re)writing of the self", includes three texts that tackle the theme of "Gender and kinship" through the prism of literature and cinema, in a LGBT perspective.

Through the study of three Mexican novels, *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) by Laura Esquivel, *Por debajo del agua* (2002) by Fernando Zamora and *Por si no te vuelvo a ver* (2007) by Laura Martínez-Belli, Nicolas Balutet questions the very meaning of "kinship." He intends to show that it is not synonymous with a biological link and we should not confuse generation (conceiving and giving birth to a child) with commitment (the parental project around the child).

Belen Hernandez analyses Pedro Almodóvar's work, in which kinship is a prevalent theme. The Spanish filmmaker questions the issue of motherhood, while he tries to expand the concept of kinship, presenting us with other models, new representations of motherhood, through transsexuals who become mothers. Therefore his dedication, at the end of *All About My Mother*, to women actresses, to men who pretend to be women, makes sense because, for Almodóvar, you were not born a mother/father, you become one.

The text of Sophie Coavoux provides an analysis of the film *Strella*, directed by Panos Koutras (2009), whose major theme is that of kinship. We can consider the film a queer revision, and even a queer rewriting, of the foundations of Greek culture, from Antiquity to popular culture: the myth of Œdipus and Sophocles' tragedy (*Œdipus the King*), but also Maria Callas and Melina Mercouri. This paper aims to analyse this narrative of queer kinship, to show how *Strella* is an attempt to renew traditional understandings of the

family and sexual, gendered identities, and to dismantle the cultural norms imposed on gender, kinship and love.

22 The subsequent two articles deal with a central question in the debate on gender and kinship, that of language, and constitute the second part of the discussion: "Language and kinship, mother tongue, name issue."

23 Focusing on the question of mother tongue, of central importance among *Zainichi*, Korean nationals established in Japan, Ayame Hosoi examines the way this mother tongue manifests itself through some literary works. Furthermore, she questions the concept of "mother tongue" itself in the context of modernity and tries to reveal the politico-historical schema in which the *Zainichi*'s mother tongue is perceived as a bicephalous mother. At the same time, she argues that in parallel another mother tongue, or rather a *generator* of language, can be heard behind the words. For some writers, this unidentifiable generator appears like a kind of impossibility to express themselves.

24 In her article, which refers to Roman history, Marine Bretin Chabrol challenges and analyses the historical confusion which presents Marcus Junius Brutus as Caesar's son. This interpretation of the events, passed on by a well-established scholarly tradition, is a misinterpretation. Twisting a statement aired by Plutarch, the French tradition has made a young man who was the son of Caesar's lover Servilia, and therefore, possibly, his *biological* son, into Caesar's *adopted* son. In that version, the dictator's murder is made more dramatic because of the tragic side of the parricide.

25 The third part of the triptych, "Fathers, mothers, nurses", concerns various issues related to the organization of the family and childcare, and the literary representation of the figures of the mother and father.

26 In her article, Min Sook Wang-Le analyses the work of the woman writer Jeon Hye-sung, and more specifically, the novel *Mayonnaise*, with the aim of understanding how she envisages the relationships between mother and daughter. The novel demystifies the image of the sacrificial and/or asexual mother. The mother is not here in a position of form-subject, limited to the sole function of motherhood, but of an independent subject totally assuming her autonomy. In this sense, Jeon Hey-seong adopts a theme which has today in Korea become a recurrent topic in women's writing, through the foregrounding of the complexity of the image of the mother in a new perspective.

27 Jacqueline Estran examines the issue of kinship which is central to the organization of Chinese traditional society, and which was heavily questioned at the beginning of twentieth-century: The revolt of the son against the father, and the revolt of women against tradition. If research has focused on the figure of the mother in women's literature, far less is known about the father. In this article, the lack of the paternal figure in the writings of four representative women writers, Bing Xin 冰心 (1900-1999), Lu Yin 廬隱 (1898-1934), Ling Shuhua 凌叔華 (1900-1990) and Feng Yuanjun 馮沅君 (1900-1974) is scrutinized.

28 Last, in an historical approach, Emmanuelle Romanet proposes a study on fostering in nineteenth-century France. More specifically, she focuses on the case of Lyon, where mercenary breast-feeding was common, and where fostering of newborns was a very old and traditional practice. This case study reminds us that the model of at-home housewives caring for their children only became a dominant pattern in the twentieth century. This kind of practices raises many questions, and this analysis can lead to a larger scale reflexion, on the organization of the family unit and childcare.

Pour citer cet article

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Articles du même auteur

Editorial [Texte intégral]

Version française

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化, 8 | 2013

Strella (film de Panos Koutras, 2009), une version queer du mythe d'Œdipe [Texte intégral]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化, 8 | 2013

Greek Diaspora and Hybrid Identities: Transnational and Transgender Perspectives in Two novels: *Loaded*, by Christos Tsiolkas (Australia) and *Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides (USA) [Texte intégral]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化, 7 | 2012

Aspects de l'hellénisme dans l'œuvre poétique de Constantin Cavafy [Texte intégral]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化, 1 | 2006

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